

The Soldier and Family Voice

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This newsletter is provided to you with the latest updated news and events concerning Soldier and Family Assistance Programs. I hope that you find the information useful.

By: Anthony J. Raimo

Battalion Soldier and Family Assistance Program Manager

College Free For Spouses

By: Tanya S. Biank, Staff Writer Fayetteville (NC) Observer [August 29, 2002] (edited)

Military spouses can now register for free college courses through an online university scholarship program. The American Military University's Spouse Schoolmates Scholarship Program is providing 2,500 scholarships worth \$3.7 million to military spouses for undergraduate education in 2002.

"We hope it will be popular," said Del Bender, an Army retiree and the AMU field representative at Fort Bragg. "It's a one-of-a-kind program. It is the only program we know of in the nation that is specifically geared for military spouses."

The scholarship program, which was launched last month in Washington, allows spouses of service members who are taking AMU courses to enroll for free. "They don't even have to pay for books," said Terry Grant, the program's director. "And that's unheard of."

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New 2002 TRICARE Handbook Available for Beneficiaries and Providers (October 30, 2002)

SOURCE: TRICARE Web Site at

<http://www.tricare.osd.mil>

After five years of honorable service to Military Health System beneficiaries and providers worldwide, the time has come to retire the TRICARE "Standard" Handbook. Its replacement, the September 2002 TRICARE Handbook, is available for distribution to beneficiaries and providers worldwide.

The new handbook highlights all three TRICARE options -- Prime, Standard and Extra -- and the many health care programs and benefits added since the 1997 edition. New topics and benefits covered include TRICARE For Life, TRICARE Prime Remote for Active Duty Family Members, TRICARE Plus, Travel Reimbursement, Chiropractic Care, TRICARE Senior Pharmacy Program, TRICARE Dental Program, Debt Collection Assistance Officer Program, Beneficiary Counseling and Assistance Coordinator Program, and more.

The handbook has a fresh new design and color. The cover is white with a vignette representing uniformed services families, ranks and memorabilia on the front and helpful telephone numbers and addresses on the back. Included inside are improved charts and graphs for cost comparisons, tips and helpful reminders for beneficiaries to consider before seeking care from authorized civilian providers.

The new handbook is being shipped to TRICARE service centers and military treatment facilities in every TRICARE region and is available to sponsors and

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Grant said 85 percent of the wives of enlisted men do not have bachelor's degrees. "There is a need," she said. "There is definitely a need. Spouse employment and education is a big issue."

The spouse can register for the same number of courses as the service member and can take any course offered by AMU, Grant said. Spouses of active-duty, Reserve and National Guard service members are eligible. The scholarship covers \$750 per course. Students must maintain a 2.5 grade point average. Classes start the first Monday of every month. Students can take four, eight or 15-week courses.

"With other grants, loans and scholarships you have to prove how bad off you are," Grant said. "You don't have to bare your financial soul to us."

Students will need computers, though. Students attend an "electronic" classroom and can e-mail their instructors, chat online with other students, and download research materials and assignments.

Grant said taking courses online is a big help to those military families who struggle with day care, lack of transportation, and moves to new duty stations.

Grant has been there herself. As the young wife of an enlisted man, she struggled to make ends meet while trying to get an education. "The bottom line is, not a lot has changed," she said. "Family income is not enough, day care is not open long enough, and there is not enough education money available."

The spouse scholarship program eases some of that burden, she said. Grant said students who don't own computers can use library computers or those on post.

Grant completed her degree in 1996. "It really changed me as a person," she said. "There was always something that was missing, and it was that sense of accomplishment. I think a woman getting her education is the most important thing she can do for herself."

Bender, the program's field representative, is also taking courses online through AMU. He said the standards are the same as in traditional classes. "You've got papers to write and books to read," he said. "The only difference is you are sitting in the pleasure of your easy chair with your computer."

For information or to register for the Spouse Schoolmates Scholarship, call (877) 468-6268 or log on to <http://www.apus.edu/apus/Spouses/> Φ

Columbus Recruiting Battalion Quality of Life Survey Results

By: Anthony J. Raimo

Soldier and Family Assistance Program Manager

To begin with, the total battalion response was thirty-nine percent (39%). Marion Company had the highest response rate (97%). Cincinnati had the lowest response rate (3 %) with the remaining companies falling in as follows: Kings Mills (59%), Columbus (50%), Dayton (41%), and Lancaster (33%). As surveys go, our (39%) response rate was quite good. Still, I would like to do much better next year.

ACTIVE DUTY RESPONSES

Question 2--Housing question 1: **Is your housing adequate for you and your family?** The total combined average of company responses came in with 90% of respondents claiming that they were satisfied with the adequacy of their housing.

Question 2--Housing question 2: **Is your travel time to your duty station reasonable?** The total combined average of company responses came in with 95% of respondents claiming that their travel time to work was reasonable.

Question 2--Housing question 3: **Is your housing cost within your housing allowance?** The total combined average of company responses came in with 64% of respondents claiming that their housing costs were within their housing allowance.

Question 2--Housing question 4: **Is your neighborhood a safe place to live?** The total combined average of company responses came in with 94% of respondents claiming that their neighborhood was a safe place to live.

Question 2--Housing question 5: **Did you have a problem obtaining housing?** The total combined average of company responses came in with 68% of respondents claiming that they did NOT have a problem obtaining housing.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

COLUMBUS RECRUITING BATTALION ANNUAL TRAINING CONFERENCE

PLACE: MARIOTT NORTH
6500 DOUBLETREE AVE
COLUMBUS, OH

TIME: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2002 THROUGH SUNDAY,
DECEMBER 8, 2002

Friday--Check in begins at 10 am. Formal awards banquet will run from 6 PM to midnight.

Saturday--Training for soldiers and their spouses (9:30AM-1PM). Spouses will have FREE shuttle service to Polaris and Tuttle Malls. Sign up for shuttle service at registration.

Sunday--Breakfast and Critique (Sensing Sessions)
DEPARTURE FOR HOME

MARITAL DISCORD CONTRIBUTED TO BRAGG MURDERS

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Nov. 7, 2002 - Marital discord, high personnel tempo and fear of counseling contributed to five murders at Fort Bragg, N.C., Army officials said today.

During a six-week period in June and July 2002, there were four homicides of active duty soldiers' wives at the base. The soldiers have been accused of the crimes.

In a fifth case, a woman allegedly killed her soldier husband. Fort Bragg and Army officials have examined the tragic incidents and recommended a number of steps to address these problems. Serious incident review boards, ordered by local commanders, investigated the incidents, as did an epidemiological consultation team from the Department of the Army.

Overall, officials at the post plan to increase awareness of domestic violence incidents and highlight the options open to families having domestic troubles.

their family members upon request. An electronic version of the handbook is available for viewing or downloading at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/TricareHandbook/> (see NOTES below).

Providers or organizations requiring additional quantities of handbooks may order the handbook from the TRICARE SMART Store at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/smart/>

Sponsors and family members with TRICARE questions or in need of assistance are still encouraged to contact their local beneficiary counseling and assistance coordinator, health benefits adviser, or TRICARE service center representative. A list of local and regional toll-free TRICARE telephone numbers is available in the handbook and on the TRICARE Web site at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/main/tollfree.htm> ☐

Post officials also plan to reach out to soldiers and their families living off post. Fort Bragg leaders have strengthened cooperation with some local jurisdictions and are working to expand cooperation with others.

The base will also sponsor immediate counseling programs for soldiers returning from forward-deployed locations. The base implemented the DoD-sponsored Ceridian Lifeworks System on Nov. 1. This system relies on a toll-free phone number Fort Bragg families can call for help in dealing with a number of issues, including domestic violence.

Post officials launched a direct-mail campaign to ensure that all spouses and soldiers have information about the service.

The Army will study the impact personnel tempo has on military families and look at building pilot programs at the base to institute workplace-oriented behavioral healthcare, violence-prevention programs, and unit-based marriage-education programs.

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Continued from page 2 **Quality of Life Survey 2002**

Question 3--**Indicate your need for individual assistance (with SFA related concerns).** The total combined average of company responses came in with 48% of respondents claiming that they could use assistance with one or more SFA related issues.

Question 4--Heath care question: **Rate your overall satisfaction with TRICARE for Active Duty Service Members and their Family Members.** The total combined average of company responses came in with 72% of respondents claiming that they were satisfied with the TRICARE for active duty service members and their family members.

Question 4--Heath care question: **Rate your overall satisfaction with MMSO for Active Duty Service Member dental care.** The total combined average of company responses came in with 79% of respondents claiming that they were satisfied with MMSO provided services for active duty dental care.

Question 4--Heath care question: **Rate your overall satisfaction with United Concordia for Active Duty Family Member dental care.** The total combined average of company responses came in with 76% of respondents claiming that they were satisfied with United Concordia provided dental services for active duty family members.

Question 4--Heath care question: **Rate your overall satisfaction with Health Benefits Advisor for Active Duty Service Members and their Family Members.** The total combined average of company responses came in with 65% of respondents claiming that they were satisfied with Health Benefits Advisor provided services.

Question 5--Knowledge/Interest in SFA programs: **Indicate your level of knowledge in SFA related programs.** The total combined average of company responses came in with 82% of respondents claiming that they were knowledgeable about SFA programs.

Question 5--Knowledge/Interest in SFA programs: **Indicate your level of interest in SFA related programs.** The total combined average of company responses came in with 69% of respondents claiming that they were interested in learning more about SFA programs.

Question 6--Emergency paperwork: **Do you need help obtaining this item?** The total combined average of company responses came in with 21% of respondents claiming that they needed help obtaining at least one of the listed items.

ACTIVE DUTY FAMILY MEMBER RESPONSES

Question 2--Housing question 1: **Is your housing adequate for you and your family?** The total combined average of company responses came in with 86% of respondents claiming that they were satisfied with the adequacy of their housing.

Question 2--Housing question 2: **Is your travel time to shopping or work reasonable?** The total combined average of company responses came in with 95% of respondents claiming that their travel time to work was reasonable.

Question 2--Housing question 3: **Is your housing cost reasonable for your house?** The total combined average of company responses came in with 59% of respondents claiming that their housing costs were reasonable for their house.

Question 2--Housing question 4: **Is your neighborhood a safe place to live?** The total combined average of company responses came in with 89% of respondents claiming that their neighborhood was a safe place to live.

Question 2--Housing question 5: **Did you have a problem obtaining housing?** The total combined average of company responses came in with 71% of respondents claiming that they did NOT have a problem obtaining housing.

Question 3--**What Programs and Services would you like to have at Annual Training Conferences and other battalion events?** The total responses received were as follows: Under the heading of **Programs**, there was one (1) request for Activities for children; one (1) request for Marriage counseling; and one (1) request for Family building.

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Under the heading of **Services**, there was one (1) request for Childcare information; one (1) request for Childcare reimbursement; one (1) request for Childcare services; and one (1) request for Social Activities that increase interaction between all battalion members.

Question 4--Heath care question: **Rate your overall satisfaction with TRICARE for Active Duty Service Members and their Family Members.** The total combined average of company responses came in with 72% of respondents claiming that they were satisfied with the TRICARE for active duty service members and their family members.

Question 4--Heath care question: **Rate your overall satisfaction with MMSO for Active Duty Service Member dental care.** The total combined average of company responses came in with 72% of respondents claiming that they were satisfied with MMSO provided services for active duty dental care.

Question 4--Heath care question: **Rate your overall satisfaction with United Concordia for Active Duty Family Member dental care.** The total combined average of company responses came in with 64% of respondents claiming that they were satisfied with United Concordia provided dental services for active duty family members.

Question 4--Heath care question: **Rate your overall satisfaction with Health Benefits Advisor for Active Duty Service Members and their Family Members.** The total combined average of company responses came in with 60% of respondents claiming that they were satisfied with Health Benefits Advisor provided services.

Question 5--Knowledge/Interest in SFA programs: **Indicate your level of knowledge in SFA related programs.** The total combined average of company responses came in with 59% of respondents claiming that they were knowledgeable about SFA programs.

Question 5--Knowledge/Interest in SFA programs: **Indicate your level of interest in SFA related programs.** The total combined average of company responses came in with 62% of respondents claiming that they were interested in learning more about SFA programs.

Question 6--SFA related Training/Workshops: **Are you interested in attending SFA related training and/or workshops?** The total combined average of company responses came in with 54% of respondents claiming that they were interested in attending one or more SFA related training and/or workshops.

Question 7--Family Support Activities: **Are you interested in participating in family support activities?** The total combined average of company responses came in with 70% of respondents claiming that they were interested in participating in one or more SFA related family support activities.

Question 8--Volunteer Program: **Are you interested in becoming an official volunteer?** The total combined average of company responses came in with 25% of respondents claiming that they were interested in becoming a volunteer.

The survey is available for your viewing at either the Columbus Recruiting Battalion Intranet (Active Duty Service Member access only) or the Internet site (Accessible to everyone). The survey is presented in bar graph format and is broken down by Company indicating the percentage of respondents per survey item. With your help, we can produce an even more effective survey next year. Thank you for your cooperation in completing this QOL assessment. Φ

Marital Discord Continued from page 3

the base to institute workplace-oriented behavioral healthcare, violence-prevention programs, and unit-based marriage-education programs.

The Army has many programs dealing with domestic abuse. Unfortunately, researchers found that many soldiers do not take advantage of such programs because they feel going for help will adversely impact their careers.

An Army working group is developing an action plan that "encourages soldiers to avail themselves of behavioral health services without adverse inference," according to an executive summary of the recommendations.

The epidemiological group eliminated the anti-malarial drug Mefloquine, also known as Lariam, as a cause for the tragic incidents. Φ